

Says Drop House Epidemic, Criminal Activity is Urgent and Unacceptable

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today wrote to the head of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, John T. Morton, urging him to expedite the agency's cooperation with a Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation requested by Mitchell on federal efforts to identify and remove criminal aliens.

"The federal government's failure to secure the border and enact reform is a huge and urgent problem that requires a tough, realistic approach," said Mitchell. "In particular, I am extremely concerned about federal immigration enforcement efforts in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The epidemic of drop houses continues and Mexican drug cartel and alien smuggling operations are so bad that Phoenix has become one of the world's kidnapping capitals. This investigation has been more than two years in the making, and we need the results as soon as possible."

In February 2008, Mitchell asked the GAO to examine federal efforts to identify and remove criminal aliens and combat with drop houses which act as way stations for drugs and humans smuggled across the border.

The Phoenix metropolitan area is believed to have about 1,000 drop houses, many of which are home to human smuggling operations. [Source: Associated Press, Jan. 16, 2008] Last year, ABC News called Phoenix the "Kidnapping Capital of the U.S.A". [Source: [ABC News](#), Feb. 11, 2009]

In addition to requesting the GAO investigation, Mitchell has repeatedly called upon the President to bring National Guard troops back to the border to help fight the growing threat posed by Mexican drug cartels. [Source: [Mitchell Release](#), July 6, 2009] Mitchell is still awaiting a response to his most recent request for National Guard troops, sent last month.

Since being elected to Congress, Mitchell has voted to help increase the number of Border Patrol agents by 42 percent, and been a strong supporter of federal funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), recently offering an amendment to stop a proposed 25 percent cut. SCAAP provides federal assistance to cash-strapped state and local agencies that are forced to divert resources from public safety services to deal with illegal immigrants. [Source: [Mitchell Release](#) , June 14, 2009]

Last year, Mitchell teamed with Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-Cal.) to amend the Fiscal Year 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill to secure additional funding for security improvements at the border. [Source: [Mitchell Release](#) , Oct. 29, 2009]

Below is the text of Congressman Mitchell's letter:

April 26, 2010

VIA FACSIMILE

John T. Morton
Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security
for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
via Office of Congressional Affairs
500 12th Street, SW - 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Assistant Secretary Morton:

I remain extremely concerned about federal immigration enforcement efforts in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The epidemic of drop houses, which operate as way stations for drugs and humans smuggled across the border, continues. Mexican drug cartel and alien smuggling operations are so bad, they have made Phoenix one of the world's kidnapping capitals.

Mitchell Urges Swift Completion of ICE Investigation

Monday, 26 April 2010 00:00

That is why House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie Thompson and I asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) work with regard to alien smuggling and criminal alien removal to ensure that efforts to secure the border will have the maximum possible impact.

GAO has informed me that their investigation is nearly complete, and that a draft report to Congress is currently awaiting comments from ICE. I understand that ICE's comments are due by May 7, 2010, but given urgency of this issue, I urge you to respond as soon as possible.

The faster GAO can complete its work, the faster Congress can hold a hearing and examine its findings.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell
Member of Congress